

Message Text

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PAGE 01 SANTIA 05552 252212Z

ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 HA-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15

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FM AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9964

INFO AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

AMEMBASSY LA PAZ

AMEMBASSY LIMA

USCINCSO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTIAGO 5552

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGSC PGOV, PINT, CI

SUBJECT: MORE ON THE FALL OF LEIGH

REFS: (A) SANTIAGO 5477, (B) SANTIAGO 5509

1. THE REPLACEMENT OF GENERAL LEIGH BY GENERAL MATTHEI ON THE JUNTA DOMINATED THE SANTIAGO PRESS JULY 25. IN ADDITION TO THE NINE GENERALS ABOVE MATTHEI WHO WERE FORCED TO RETIRE, 10 GENERALS BELOW HIM HAVE SUBMITTED THEIR RESIGNATIONS AND THEY HAVE BEEN ACCEPTED. SINCE THERE ARE ONLY 21 AIR FORCE GENERALS, THIS LEAVES ONLY MATTHEI AND JAVIER LOPETEGUI. THE LATTER WILL RETURN FROM BEING AIR ATTACHE IN WASHINGTON TO ASSUME THE AIR FORCE SECOND POSITION. BY DECREE THE NIGHT OF JULY 24 THE AIR FORCE NAMED EIGHT NEW GENERALS; PRESUMABLY OTHER PROMOTIONS ARE IN THE WORKS. BECAUSE OF THE MASSIVE DEPARTURE OF THE GENERALS THERE HAS BEEN SPECULATION THAT OFFICERS AT LOWER GRADES WOULD ALSO EITHER RESIGN OR REFUSE TO COOPERATE WITH THE REGIME. THERE HAS BEEN NO EVIDENCE OF THIS SO FAR AND THERE IS AN UNCONFIRMED REPORT THAT LEIGH SPECIFICALLY ASKED THE COLONELS AND LESSER OFFICERS TO STAY ON FOR THE GOOD OF THE COUNTRY.

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PAGE 02 SANTIA 05552 252212Z

3. CHRONOLOGY OF A JUNTA COUP. WE HAD BEEN TOLD OVER THE WEEKEND THAT THE JUNTA WOULD MEET AT 1100 HOURS JULY 24 TO EXPEL LEIGH. TO COUNTER THIS MOVE LEIGH WOULD MEET WITH HIS OWN GENERALS AT 1000 AND, ARMED WITH THEIR SUPPORT, WOULD REJECT THE JUNTA'S EFFORTS TO REMOVE HIM. WHAT HAPPENED, APPARENTLY, IS THE THE WOLF WENT THE THIRD LITTLE PIG ONE BETTER AND SCHEDULED

THE JUNTA MEETING FOR 080 HOURS. BY 0815 HOURS MATTHEI HAD BEEN CALLED IN AND WAS TOLD THAT HE WOULD BE THE NEW AIR FORCE CHIEF AND HE THEN DEPARTED FOR THE MAIN AIR FORCE BASE EL BOSQUE; MEANWHILE, THE AIR FORCE GENERALS WERE ARRIVING AT THE DEFENSE MINISTRY FOR THE MEETING WITH LEIGH, WHICH HAD BEEN MOVED UP TO 0900 HOURS. THEY WERE ALLOWED IN BUT NOT OUT UNTIL MATTHEI HAD ESTABLISHED HIS NEW POSITION AT EL BOSQUE AND CALLED THE CTING COMMANDERS AT OTHER IMPORTANT AIR FORCE INSTALLATIONS. AN INTERESTING UNANSWERED QUESTION IS WHEN PINOCHET GOT MATTHEI ON BOARD. IT SEEMS UNLIKELY THE NEWS OF HIS SELECTION CAME AS A SURPRISE TO MATTHEI AT 0815. PINOCHET WOULD HAVE BEEN IN SERIOUS DIFFICULTIES AT THAT HOUR IF MATTHEI HAD REFUSED TO ACCEPT THE JOB.

4. A VIEW FROM THE PDC. IN A TALKS THE NIGHT OF JULY 24 BETWEEN AN EMBASSY OFFICER AND A LEADER OF THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY (PDC), IT WAS APPARENT THAT THE PDC HAD EXPECTED LEIGH TO PUT UP A MUCH BETTER STRUBBLE AGAINST PINOCHET. THE PDC'S EXPECTATION FOR JULY 24 WAS THAT LEIGH WITH HIS GENERALS AND OTHER AIR FORCE SUPPORTERS WOULD RETIRE TO EL BOSQUE AIR BASE FOR TWO, THREE OR MORE DAYS. THIS ACT OF DEFIANCE, IF IT COULD BE PROLONGED FOR A NUMBER OF DAYS, WOULD HAVE GIVEN TIME FOR ANTI-PINOCHET ELEMENTS IN THE NAVY AND CARABINEROS TO COME TO THE FORE. ALSO THE VARIOUS CIVILIAN ELEMENTS THAT LEIGH'S SUPPORTERS HHD LINED UP WOULD HAVE GONE PUBLIC. THE PDC WAS TO HAVE BEEN IN THE FOREFRONT; IT WILL NOW CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 SANTIA 05552 252212Z

KEEP QUIET.

5. THIS PARTICULAR PDC SOURCE THINKS THAT LEIGH BADLY MISHANDLED THE SITUATION AND IS NOW FINISHED AS AN IMPORTANT INFLUENCE IN CHILEAN POLITICS. THE PARTY IS DISAPPOINTED BUT DOES NOT THINK THAT PINOCHET IS YET OUT OF HIS PROBLEMS OVER THE LETELIER CASE. ACCORDING TO THE SOURCE, THE COUNTDOWN HAS BEGUN EVEN THOUGH IT MAY TAKE QUITE A WHILE. LANDAU

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Message Attributes

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